



HISTORICAL RECOLLECTIONS,

A

DISCOURSE,

DELIVERED AT LEBANON, N. H.

ON

THANKSGIVING DAY, NOVEMBER 25, 1836 :

EMBRACING THE LEADING EVENTS IN THE

CIVIL AND ECCLESIASTICAL HISTORY

Of said Town,

TO THE CLOSE OF REV. ISAIAH POTTER'S MINISTRY.

BY PHINEHAS COOKE,

Pastor of the Congregational Church in Lebanon.

PUBLISHED BY REQUEST OF THE CHURCH



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1837

THANKSGIVING SERMON.

DEUTERONOMY, 8: 2.

“And thou shalt remember all the way which the Lord thy God led thee these forty years in the wilderness, to humble thee, and to prove thee, to know what was in thine heart, whether thou wouldest keep his commandments or no.”

THE usual way the pious mind pursues to strengthen its confidence in God, is to recall former dispensations of divine providence, and thence derive motives for future trust. Moses, in the chapter including the text, avails himself of this circumstance, to induce Israel to confide in God, and render obedience to his commands. They were at a stage in their journey, where the account of God's merciful dealings with them was calculated to elicit their devout gratitude. They had filled up their forty years in the wilderness, and stood on the bank of Jordan, a favorable land-mark where to record the first portion of their history, on their way to the promised land. To refresh their remembrance, their leader recites some of the most interesting providences of God towards them and their fathers, that they might in future set their hope in God. This should be a leading object in all historical recollections. With this distinctly in view, let us trace the former dealings of God with the inhabitants of this town, and see if we do not find motives of renewed confidence in our heavenly Father, and occasion for sincere regret, that he has been served no better.

In doing this, I purpose to review our civil and ecclesiastical history in separate order. The charter granting civil immunities to this town is dated July 4, 1761, in the first year of the reign of George III. ; just fifteen years before the declaration of American Independence. The number of Grantees was sixty-two. The majority of these at the time resided at Mansfield, Connecticut, where several of the first proprietors' meetings were holden. Their first meeting is dated October 6, 1761, in which Mr. Nehemiah Estabrook presided as moderator, and Mr. John Salter was clerk. The date of the charter is the same with Plainfield, in this vicinity, two years earlier than Cornish, and three, than Claremont. This accounts for a committee appointed by the proprietors, September 1, 1762, composed of Capt. Nathaniel Hall, Mr. John Hanks, and Mr. John Birchard, “to lay out a horse-road from the old fort No. 4, now Charlestown, to Lebanon.” Sixty eight years ago

the country between this and Charlestown was not sufficiently open to admit the passage of a horse. How the wilderness has become a fruitful field, and the desert a fold, for flocks and herds !

The settlement in this town began near Connecticut river ; and the first families with their effects came in boats from Charlestown.* Such enterprize, manifested in the settlement of new countries, I do not say is peculiar to Americans ; but I think no nation has ever discovered more bold and persevering marks of it, than are to be found in our own history. Instead of settling the place adjoining the one already occupied, it was no uncommon thing at that day, for a few families to advance into the wilderness fifteen or twenty miles beyond any other settlement, and there commence the attack on the forest. This was in many respects the fact with the first settlers in Lebanon.

It was evidence of no small courage for a few families, at that day, to plant themselves in the woods, insulated and remote from neighbors, where savage beasts had not yielded their possession to the dark forest, and where savage men had not been driven from their lurking places. These perils of the wilderness were borne with that fortitude by the fathers, which it is not certain would be found in their children, should they be placed in similar circumstances.

In the winter of 1762, four men hazarded the undertaking to reside in the western part of the town. Their names were Levi Hyde, Samuel Estabrook, William Dana ; the name of the other not ascertained. During a severe snow storm, Mr. Dana came near perishing, while absent from his companions to feed their oxen at a place called *Bearer Meadow*. It is said a man came to them from the north during the winter, having deserted from the British garrison.

The next year several families came in from Connecticut. Mr. William Downer with his wife and eight children arrived here July 11, 1763, and were the first family that came to the place. In the autumn of that year, Oliver Davidson, Elijah Dewey and James Jones, arrived with their families. All these spent the following winter, and no lives were lost. It is evident a merciful providence shielded these men, women and children from the wintry blasts, and deep snows of those days, when they were so poorly provided with comfortable habitations.

The two following years several families more came from Mansfield, Lebanon, and other towns in Connecticut. Those who arrived between the years 1761 and 1766, may properly be considered the first settlers. Besides those already named, we find the following : Na-

* To this place, for some time the first settlers were obliged to go for their milling. And on one occasion, owing to the mills not being in order, they were obliged to go to Montague, Mass., a distance of 20 miles. The voyage (for the men went by water) was performed in twenty-one days. His family, and others, as might well be expected, anxious for his return, began to conclude he was deceived. At length the canoe arrived, freighted with a cargo most welcome to the whole colony.

thamel Porter, Asa Kilburn, Samuel Meechum, Joseph Dana, Jonathan Dana, Huckin Storrs, Silas Waterman, Jedediah Hubbard, Charles Hill, John Wheatley, Jesse Cooke, Zalmon~~us~~ Aspinwall, Joseph Wood, James Hartshorn, and Nathaniel Storrs.

The first town meeting, of which any record remains, was September 12, 1765, in which John Wheatley presided. Were I to single out an individual, to whom this town, in its early days, was specially indebted for his exertions in its behalf, I would name John Wheatley, Esq. He was the first town clerk ; for nearly twenty years, the first civil magistrate ; the first school-master, and the first representative under the present constitution of New Hampshire. To all his acknowledged qualifications for civil life, was added piety, and such religious gifts as made him a suitable person to lead in the meetings of the Church, in the absence of the minister. He was the first man who fixed his habitation amidst the lofty pines on this plain, where has since risen this pleasant and flourishing village.

During this year the *grave yard* in the west part of the town was laid out, on land belonging to Mr. Charles Hill. It is said to be the oldest north of Charlestown. The first adult buried in it, was Mr. *Oliver Davidson* ; the first young man, Mr. *Ezra Perkins*. Previously to the interment of these, two or three children are said to have died in town. What a multitude since have been gathered to the congregation of the dead ? Our fathers, where are they ? The places particularly appropriated for the dead, now in town, are five. The town is said *never* to have been visited with an epidemick. The annual number of deaths have probably been one to eighty-five, or ninety inhabitants.

The first school regularly organized was in 1768. It was kept in a log school-house, east of the present residence of Capt. Joseph Wood, in what is now district No. 3. In 1775 there were four school districts. Now there are sixteen, and the average number of scholars attending during the last winter (1835) was 615.

About the year 1770, the families in town were numbered, and found to be forty-two, containing one hundred and ninety-five souls. This numbering was made to ascertain the relative distance of each family from the spot contemplated as the site of a *meeting-house*. The first house of worship was erected in 1772, and stood a little west of the old grave yard. Some years after, it was removed, and rebuilt on the hill near Elihu Hyde's, that it might be more central to the increased population. It was here occupied until the one now standing on the common was built, in the year 1792.

In March, 1771, the town voted to give a portion of their territory adjoining Haverhill, containing 1440 acres, to Dr. John Pier Wheelock's

school, should such school be established. This land is still the property of Dartmouth College, and is called the *College Grant*. At that time it was the intention of the venerable founder of Dartmouth College to form a parish, including the above grant and College plain, by the name of *Dresden*, which in fact was the name given to it for a number of years. For some reason no incorporation was obtained, and the plan failed.

Owing to the above grant, but especially to the contiguity of the two places, there has ever been an endeared connection between this town and the seat of learning in its neighborhood. Many of our sons* have availed themselves of a public education, and some have reflected honor on their *Alma Mater*.

The days now came on in the history of this town, and of our country, which emphatically tried men's souls. The colonies were assailed with war—war with one of the most powerful nations on the globe. This direful calamity, though it first fell on the more vulnerable points of the nation, soon reached, in its various bearings, every family in the land. The firing at the battle of *Bunker Hill* was literally heard in this, and the adjoining towns. Never did air become the vehicle of greater alarm. Over hills and mountains, through valleys and plains, the hollow murmur creeps, to tell the children of the Pilgrims their liberties must be purchased with their blood.

With peculiar weight did these trials fall on the new settlements. They were compelled to exchange the axe for the fire-arms, the ploughshare for the sword, before the land had yielded scarcely a competency for themselves and their families. The names of *Luther Wheatley*, *Edward Slapp*, *Eleazer Mather Porter*, *David Millington*, and Capt. *Joseph Estabrook* are mentioned as those who lost their lives by going into the war. Luther Wheatley was mortally wounded in the battle near Stillwater. September 19, 1777, and died the 30th of the same month, aged 17. In remembering all the way which the Lord thy God led thee these forty years in the wilderness, it will be profitable to reflect that the present peace and prosperity of this town is connected with the loss of some of its first citizens, whose deaths helped to purchase the freedom we now enjoy.

At the close of the war, the people of this and several other towns lying near the river, were perplexed awhile with their political relations. In 1778, a pamphlet was read in town meeting, containing the Constitution of Vermont; whereupon it was voted unanimously to accept their government, and come under its jurisdiction. This connection did not last long, and was first broken off by our sister State. In 1780,

* About forty are enrolled on the catalogue ending with the class of 1829.—Among the first educated, we find the names of Experience Estabrook, Ezekiel Colburn, Elijah Deane, Samuel Wood, D. D. and Walter Harris, D. D.

“the town agreed to govern themselves according to the laws of Connecticut, in those acts which refer to the peace and good order of towns.” Here is seen a trait of character truly estimable. In those days, when there was no ruler in Israel, and every man did what was right in his own eyes, our fathers, instead of abandoning themselves to disorder and misrule, made what provision they could to maintain the peace of society. It was this moral principle—this disposition to self-government, which laid the foundation for our national compact. The sons of the Pilgrims, by birth, education and religion, were fitted for a republican government. For such a blessing they looked many years previous to the revolution. To obtain it, they fought and bled; and to be prepared for its enjoyment, they suppressed the riot-stirring elements of passion in their own breasts. They united, at this time, with the inhabitants of *Dresden*, in appointing a *Committee of Safety*, to whose authority all disorderly persons were to be amenable. Mr. Bezaleel Woodward and Mr. Simeon Dewey, of the last named place, and Dea. Nehemiah Estabrook, of Lebanon, were the first committee of this kind. This committee was not deficient in power, for it was absolute. They could depute any man at a moment’s warning, and clothe him with all the authority of high *Bailiff*, and send him to apprehend whom they pleased. When the prisoner was tried, and the decision passed, there was no appeal. Notwithstanding, they were poorly furnished with the means of punishment. No publick prison then to receive their convicts. They might indeed be, and probably were, a terror to evil-doers, but were quite deficient in the usual implements of justice, to reward the wicked according to their works.

In March, 1778, “the Committee of Safety, and the Selectmen, were authorized and instructed by the town to exert their influence to suppress *tippling-houses*.” More than fifty years ago our fathers discovered a foresight highly creditable to them, that the free use of ardent spirit was injurious and destructive to the welfare and peace of society. At that day the *whole town* might be considered a *Temperance Society*. Their vote clearly implied it. Their doings, it is presumed, excited no alarm that a union was designed between Church and State. During the last half century, the people in our country have freely indulged the opposite course, until intemperance has slain its thousands, and tens of thousands. Of late, a happy re-action has commenced, and the wise, the good and the patriotic, are uniting to redeem the land from this terrible scourge. That true wisdom has advanced with the age of the world, is yet to be proved. In the year 1779, soon after the burning of Royalton, Vt. by the Indians, the inhabitants of this town were much alarmed for fear the savages were about to attack Newbury, in the same State. Soldiers were raised

and sent north in scouting parties, while others were considered *minute men*, ready for any exigency that might occur. This alarm was of short duration, and was the last before peace was declared between us and Great Britain.

The time now approached in the history of this town, and of New Hampshire, when a Constitution of government was to be formed, consonant to the principles of civil and religious freedom, for which they had, in common with their fellow-citizens, bore the mighty struggle in the war for independence. At the time the charter for this town was obtained, John Wentworth was Provincial Governor. The British government was dissolved in 1775, and the people formed a Provincial Convention, of which Matthew Thornton was President. In 1776, a temporary Constitution was framed, to continue during the war with Great Britain. Under this Constitution, Meshech Weare was annually elected President. A new and permanent Constitution took place in 1783, in the formation of which, this town, with the rest of the State, was invited to participate. Their first representative to the State Convention, as has been observed, was John Wheatley, Esq. The inhabitants of this town, with others at that day, were exceeding jealous of their rights, lest the government about to be organized should not guaranty their dear-bought liberties. This is discoverable in the instructions given their representative; and on one occasion in recalling him.

There is no period in the history of the American Republic, or of the individual States, more critical than when they were about to form for themselves civil government. While fighting their common foe, they had the strongest motives for union. That variety of elements which composes society, will in such a case be drawn together, as with the force of chemical attraction. But when the common enemy is subdued, and a plan must be devised how they can best protect and enjoy their dear-bought blessings, there appears what a celebrated statesman calls "the wilderness of free minds." To bring these minds to unite in a form of government, while they had such loose and undefined notions of legislation, required vastly more skill than to govern them in the ranks of an army. He, who allayed the storm of war, was pleased to hush into peace the mixed elements of society, and control the mass of mind, by the influence of patriotism, virtue, and religion. In a few years, the world, for the first time beheld the sublime spectacle of an extensive community, governing themselves by the gentle reins of a representative Republic. To behold America governing herself, was a more astonishing sight than to see her conquer her enemies. To an European statesman, the ease and promptitude with which this infant nation formed for themselves a free and efficient government,

and the happiness they so soon enjoyed beneath its protection, was a phenomenon never before seen in the science of legislation. No doubt many eyes from abroad were looking for the destruction of a people by anarchy and intestine commotion, who could not be subdued by arms. But the power that conquered, saved. The men who bought peace at so dear a rate, knew how to enjoy it ; while all the glory is due to Him who rules the destiny of nations ; causing the wrath of man to praise him, and restraining the residue.

II. As proposed, let us now trace the ecclesiastical history of the town.

In Dec. 1762, before the purchasers came to the place, they appointed a committee to treat with proprietors of townships adjoining, to unite with them, to make provision for the preaching of the gospel. Soon after, they voted a tax on each proprietor for the same purpose. Here is a movement in the first owners of Lebanon that deserves commendation. Behold a company of men in Connecticut, having purchased a township in New Hampshire, and about to commence its settlement, planning how they can have the gospel. And this, before a single farm is cleared, or framed house erected. Like their puritan fathers, they must have *the gospel* in the wilderness. And where could they more need it ? Their fathers' God was their God ; the religion of their fathers, their religion—Provision must be early made to adore the former, and enjoy the consolations of the latter. What has diminished the value of the gospel so much in view of *some* of their descendants ?

The first inhabitants did not come here merely to advance their worldly interests. Higher motives seem to be mixed with the enterprise. Had they been assured that they would not have enjoyed the institutions of religion for a course of years, it is probable that many of them would not have left the sanctuary of their fathers at the time they did. In their emigration, one object was to extend the limits of the Church. The pious part imbibed a portion of the spirit of the FOUNDER of the neighboring College, who came about the same time from the same section of country ;* and whose leading object, it is well known, was to extend the boundaries of the Redeemer's kingdom. Occasionally, in the first years of their pilgrimage, they heard the gospel from the lips of that good man, whose voice at the time, in the region around, reminds us of him, " who cried in the wilderness, prepare ye the way of the Lord, make his paths straight."

The prosperity of this town is more indebted to the regard for religion manifested by the fathers, than perhaps some of their descend-

* Lebanon, Conn.

ants imagine. It is the will of heaven, that every enterprize, sanctioned and sustained by the spirit of the gospel, shall be successful. The prayers of pious parents cause the balmy dews of heaven to fall round the dwellings of their children, long after the lips which uttered them are shut up in death.

The Church was organized, Sept. 27, 1768, in the presence of Rev. Bulkley Olcott, of Charlestown, and Rev. James Wellman, of Cornish. It was founded on the plan of the *pedo-baptist* Churches of New England. In the preamble to their Covenant, they express themselves as follows: "*As God, through the mediation of his Son, has erected for himself a Church and visible Kingdom on earth, collected from such ruins of the apostacy, as return and fear him, and desire to pay a grateful remembrance to his SON, AS THEIR CRUCIFIED SAVIOUR; so we, sinful dust and ashes, desire to subscribe with our hands unto the Lord, and give up ourselves in an everlasting covenant to God. We esteem it an unspeakable privilege, that sinful dust and ashes may thus come and covenant with the great God, and be acknowledged by him as his Church on earth.*" At the close of this, follow several articles, very similar to those which the Church now observe. They are subscribed by *Joseph Dana, John Wheatley, Azariah Bliss, John Slapp, Jonathan Dana and Zacheus Downer.*

June 24, 1772, a short time previous to the settlement of Mr. Potter, a *Confession of Faith* was adopted, embracing the various doctrines, as received by the evangelical Churches of New England. These articles, the same in substance to those the Church now have, it will be seen are Calvinistic, or orthodox. The meaning of the latter word is "sound in opinion and doctrine, not heretical." Doctrines like these, the founders of the Church were not ashamed to acknowledge, whatever may be the opinion of some of their descendants.

The Church, with the town, now began to look for a pastor. Several ministers were employed previous to Mr. Potter. We find the names of Niles, Treadway and Wales. To the latter they gave a call to settle, but he did not incline to accept.

The Rev. Isaiah Potter, after two seasons of probation, was constituted the Pastor of this Church and people, August 25, 1772. He was ordained in the open air, on a stage erected for the purpose, on land adjoining Connecticut river, the west side of the road, near "Bayley's Ferry." The Sermon on the occasion was delivered by the Rev. Mr. Olcott, of Charlestown. By those present, the services were said to have been solemn and interesting. At the close, the newly constituted pastor affectionately addressed his flock, especially

the younger part, exhorting them not to have any vain amusements, dancing and the like, for such recreations would be quite unsuitable with the religious services they had just witnessed. This, while it shows the spirituality of your first pastor, manifests that sense of propriety which the sober minded, both ministers and lay brethren, have ever exhibited. Men of reflection, laying no claims to piety, readily see a most obvious incongruity in following religious scenes with thoughtless merriment. However incompatible such things are, the enemy of all good influences the thoughtless and the gay, to get up *balls* on the eve of ordinations, and during revivals of religion, that with a kind of maniac desperation he may shew his dislike to every thing holy.

At a Church meeting, October 29, 1772, Joseph Dana was elected an officer in the Church, and was their first deacon. The first time the sacrament of the Lord's Supper was administered, was November 15, 1772. Thus in nine years from the first settlement of the town, a Church was organized, a minister settled, and the ordinances of the gospel enjoyed.

"Can God furnish a table in the wilderness?" once inquired the unbelieving Jews. For the faithful in Christ, such a table is furnished, not only with temporal, but with spiritual food. At an early day it was spread for the little band in this place. Our fathers at their first arrival seem to have adopted the resolution of the Psalmist—"Surely I will not come into the tabernacle of my house, nor go up unto my bed; I will not give sleep to mine eyes, nor slumber to my eye-lids, until I find out a place for the Lord, an habitation for the mighty God of Jacob. Lo we heard of it at Ephratah, we found it in the fields of the wood." Enclosed in the dark shades of the forest, they were seen by few eyes, except those of angels. In company with their altar and their God, they resembled the "Pilgrim Fathers," when they first enjoyed the holy ordinances in this western wilderness.

March 24, 1775, Deacon Joseph Dana, advanced in life, resigned his office in the Church, and Nehemiah Estabrook and Jonathan Dana were chosen deacons in the Church.

July 24, 1777, was observed by the Church as a day of fasting, humiliation and prayer, "on account of the distress of the war, and the near approach of the enemy after Ticonderoga was given up."

They who estimate things merely by human reason, and weigh all events in earthly balances, and expect in the tug of war that victory will ~~come~~ ^{be won} with the strongest physical force, would in the days of the American revolution have concluded that the assailants in the end would be conquerors. But to those who view the subject in the light

of justice, and know how deeply the pious in our land felt their dependence on God, and while they fought bravely they prayed fervently, it is no mystery that the nation became free and independent. It is a decree of heaven that "righteousness exalteth a nation," and that oppression and robbery shall not go unpunished. It is doubtful whether history furnishes a parallel, since the Jews in their best state, where so much supplication was made to heaven during a war, as in the American Churches.

On the day of fasting just named, the members of the Church renewed their covenant with God. October 12, 1781, the Church elected Zaccheus Downer for one of their deacons; and on the 18th of April following, Theophilus Huntington was appointed to the same office, in place of Dea. Dana removed from town.

On April 23, 1782, occurred an event, on some accounts the most remarkable this Church has yet witnessed. It was the gathering in the first fruits of a revival of religion, amounting to fifty-three persons. These were added in one day. Not long after, thirty-three more were added at one time. Considering the number of inhabitants then in town, which did not probably exceed 500, and it can hardly be supposed that the like was to be found in New England. In *these* days of revivals, such additions in our large towns are no very common event. This highly interesting occasion made, as it ought to, a suitable impression on the Church. We observe them at the time making public confession of their sins to God, and asking forgiveness of God and of each other.

The remark, though common, is worth repeating, that a season of revival is a *sifting time* with professors. The Holy Spirit is near, and believers inquire, *How shall we meet him?* The answer is, "up, sanctify yourselves—stablish your hearts, for the coming of the Lord draweth nigh." Then commence deep self-examination and thorough heart-searchings. Then sin is viewed in the light of God's countenance, and discoveries are made which produce self-loathing. Then begins a mourning, on account of backslidings, like the mourning of *Hadadrisman*. Then Christians abhor themselves on account of unbelief and remissness of duty. Did not the members of the Church humble themselves at such seasons, there would be wanting one important evidence that a real work of grace was in operation.

At the time the above were admitted, the members then belonging to the Church, and those previously added, amounted to 204. Considering its infancy, there was probably not a more flourishing Church in this region. And we have the testimony of christian observers in other places that this was the fact. Its prosperity warrants the belief that it was built on the foundation of the prophets and apostles, Jesus

Christ himself being the chief corner stone. The evidence is also conclusive that the doctrine dispensed, was the faithful exhibition of the truth. The remark has been made by aged Clergymen, that at the time your first pastor was settled, the number of those denominated "revival ministers" in New Hampshire was less than ten; and that *he* was one. By "revival minister" is understood one who considers the greatest blessing attending his ministry to be a "season of refreshing from the presence of the Lord," resembling that on the day of Pentecost, and who would do all in his power to promote such a season. There is evidence that a portion of the spirit of Edwards, Belamy and Brainerd, dwelt in the first leader of this flock.

That the Church endeavored strictly to maintain the discipline of God's house is equally evident. Their records plainly shew a holy concern, that the household of faith be kept from heretical sentiments and irreligious practices. "March 3, 1734, the Church voted that they consider it unbecoming in a profession of godliness, for young persons, professors, to practice frolicking and vain mirth; likewise, for elderly persons to indulge in idleness, in foolish talking and jesting—that they will set a watch about them in future, and refrain."

All consistent christians of this day fully concur in the above resolution. "Let every one that nameth the name of Christ, depart from iniquity."

In the year 1737, Deacon Jonathan Dana having returned to reside again in town, it was proposed to the Church by Deacon Huntington, that he be requested to accept his former office in the Church. It will be recollected that the latter was chosen in the place of the former, when he removed from town. That the proposal should come from Deacon Huntington to have Deacon Dana re-instated, when the consequences were *his* own retirement from office, discovers a temper becoming a disciple of Christ.

"Be kindly affectioned one to another with brotherly love; in honor preferring one another." "At a Church meeting, November 21, 1738, Deacon Dana having removed from town the second time, the Church requested Deacon Huntington *again* to take his seat, and serve them as a deacon." "He that humbleth himself shall be exalted." Some time after this, the date not mentioned, Mr. Nathaniel Storrs was appointed a deacon. Those who have been named may be considered the early officers in the Church.

It will be recollected, near the beginning of the history of the Church, that in its regulations it was denominated "*pædo-baptist*." That its members scrupulously regarded infant baptism as an ordinance of the gospel, is evident from what appears on the records, in the year 1756. A member having removed from town requested a dismission for the

following reason—"That he believed in believer's baptism, instituted by Christ for us to follow ;" meaning, as is supposed, that he held with the Baptist denomination on this point. The church voted and sent him the following reply : " Our faith is the same as yours, we hold to none other but believer's baptism, 'instituted by Christ for us to follow ;' and that it is in faith only that believers are to give themselves and their seed to God in baptism, as Abraham, the father of the faithful, gave himself and his seed to God in the covenant of circumcision, that the blessing of Abraham might come on us Gentiles. But, Sir, if you reject believer's baptism to their infant seed, herein we think you reject an ordinance of God, in which you have covenanted to walk with this Church. We have no desire to control your conscience, but if you depart from your covenant obligation, in any divine ordinance, it must be at your own hazard, for we have no power to absolve any one from covenant vows. We wish you divine direction, and that the spirit of truth may teach and lead you into all truth.

Your friends and brethren in the Church, &c."

From this letter, it seems the church adhered strictly to their first faith, and that they knew how to defend it.

There is an event, recorded by a funeral sermon preached by Mr. Potter, which deserves a place in this account. Mr. Potter and three others, by the names of *Chamberlain*, *Currier* and *Bruce*, were crossing the *Mascoma River* in a high freshet, a little north of Hubbard's mill, April 16, 1798. By some means they lost the management of the canoe, and were drifting fast towards the falls below, when Mr. P. leaping into the stream, swam ashore ; Chamberlain and Currier were drowned. Bruce hanging to the canoe while it went over the falls, at length made his escape by swimming. As might be well supposed, the event made a most deep impression on those preserved from a watery grave, and on the inhabitants generally. The text on which the funeral discourse was founded, was in Job 1 : 19.—" And it fell upon the young men, and they are dead ; and I only am escaped alone to tell thee."

* *Extract from the Sermon.*

" While I tell you these things, you are to remember, that I have not only escaped to tell you the young men are dead, but in connection with the serious event, as a minister of the gospel, to preach to you the great truth, in which you yourselves are most highly interested : that there is a God, in whose hand your life and breath is ; at whose disposal you are ; who is of purer eyes than to behold evil, who judgeth the righteous, but who is angry with the wicked every day. I am to tell you that you are under the curse of the law, if you have not repented ; that your feet stand on slippery places, while yet in sin, and that your danger is great, and that you *must* repent, or perish. I am to tell you, this life is your probationary season to prepare for eternity ; that beyond this life, there is a heaven for the righteous, into which they will enter, and dwell in the presence of their God, and

From this to the close of Mr. Potter's ministry, are recorded no events particularly deserving notice. Additions were frequently made to the Church, and the whole number who united during the above period, was 372. Out of this number have arisen twelve ministers of the gospel; some of whom have been the favored instruments of building up large and flourishing churches. In this way ministers live in their successors, perpetuating the gospel seed through the long line of successive generations, exemplifying that consoling promise, "Lo I am with you alway, even unto the end of the world."

The faithful pastor who is instrumental of raising up twelve others to dispense the word of life, multiplies himself twelve times. The church, while it exists on earth, is debtor to such a man.

Mr. Potter retired from his public labors, Sept. 19, 1816, having performed the arduous duties of minister to this people, forty-four years. About eleven months after, he departed this life, aged 71. When he was ordained there were in town but 40 families. Two and half years after his death the number of inhabitants was 1710.

More than forty years did your pious leader conduct you through the wilderness, until you arrived at a respectable civil and religious eminence. To say his influence was not *great* and *good* in training this people from infancy to manhood, would be an act of injustice to his memory, and ingratitude to God. The influence of a faithful servant of Christ forty years, commencing with an infant settlement, is immense. This influence is felt when the organ which exerted it is no more. It has a posthumous existence. Though the *minister* is dead the *ministry* lives. I see its effects in the attachment to truth, apparent in a portion of this people. I see it in the existence of a Church, legitimate in its descent, steadfastly adhering to the sentiments and principles which constituted her glory in her brightest days.

I see it amid many painful exceptions, in some pious youth, the offspring of a believing ancestor, who was trained by its precepts and ordinances. I see it among the aged, especially when some are brought to witness their faith in the hour of dissolution. Their piety seems like that of another age. It is faith of no sickly growth. It shows many points of alliance with that once delivered to the saints. O that I could see it more generally in the second and third generations. I pity the man, when questioned about the religion of himself and family, who can give no other answer than that his *parents* or *grand-parents* were pious. Shades of my ancestors! let me never attempt to

be happy forever; and that there is a *hell*, a place of unutterable torment and distress, for the wicked who continue in sin, and will not come to Christ Jesus for life; and all the time you live in sin on the earth, you are treasuring up wrath against the day of wrath, and the revelation of the righteous judgment of God."

borrow a short-lived reputation by naming your virtues, while my own conduct proves me unworthy such a lineage.

It were indeed an honour to form a link in that bright chain which connects the present generation with the pious founders of New England. It is believed such links may be found among us.

I love to trace the unbroken line from some pious youth through his immediate and remote ancestors to the little band which composed the infant church in this town. From thence I follow it to a family in a distant State. There it passes from generation to generation, associated with examples of piety, eminent in the church of God. Thence it runs to the early fathers of New England, and shows its origin to have been from those of whom the world was not worthy, and who suffered the loss of all things for Christ.

The day is coming when to be *one* in such a lineage would be greater honour than to stand in the line of the Cæsars.

In conclusion, I would invite the people of this place to remember all the way in which the Lord thy God hath hitherto led thee, and you will find abundant reason for thanksgiving and praise. "Stand ye in the ways and see, and ask for the old paths, where is the good way, and ye shall find rest unto your souls." To know when you were the most happy, you have only to compare the different portions of your history before and since your first Pastor's death. Do you desire union? What surer way to obtain it, than to return to your *first love*, and do your *first works*? After walking together in the funeral procession of your beloved pastor, what evil angel hovered over you, and scattered among you the seeds of discord? Alas, what a growth of ~~enmity~~ ^{envy}, hatred, jealousy and prejudice has sprung up on every side? While you inhabit a town second in wealth to but one in the County, do not forget those who laid its foundation. Your fathers made their beds with the leaves of the forest, and had for their covering the canopy of heaven; and *you* dwell in your "coiled houses," and sleep on down. They, with their countrymen, fought and bled in the "tented field," and *you* sit quietly beneath your vines and fig trees. They made sacrifices to establish the gospel; at an early day enjoyed its precious consolations, died in its faith, and have transmitted the invaluable legacy to you, their descendants. Will you receive it? Are you thankful for it? Or do you spurn it, and pronounce *their religion* superstition, folly? If you wish to cherish the memory of their virtues you will follow their pious example. Their enterprize, their temperance, their religion, are worthy your imitation. Counteract, by energy of character and purity of morals, the humiliating remark, that the descendants of the first inhabitants usually degenerate. The time is recollected by

some, now on the stage, when but two persons in town indulged the vulgar and sinful use of profane language. By the virtues of your fore-fathers, by due regard for self-respect, by the fearful responsibilities, arising from moral accountability, I entreat you to fear God and keep his commandments.

Christians, the subject awakens in your hearts a thousand grateful recollections. You inherit the Bible and faith of your fathers. You will not give them up. You will not exchange "old gold for new tinsel." "You will not hastily receive doctrines essentially different from those transmitted you by your fathers, unless they are attested by a piety more deep, and fervent, and by a practice more pure and exemplary." Having seen in many instances, the happy issue of their faith, *you* will not launch into the sea of experiment, on which so many at this day float, heedless of the breakers in their path, and the rugged coast on which they are in imminent danger of being shipwrecked and lost. With mournful pleasure, you will reflect on the days of other years, when the candle of the Lord shone on the tabernacle of your fathers, and when the good Spirit of our God revived his work among *them*. The solemn fact that there is a less number of visible believers in the town than when it contained only 500 people, will cause you to weep for the slain of the daughter of Zion, and to pray, "Spare thy people, O Lord, and give not thine heritage to reproach." You will pause—You will reflect, when such moral degeneracy presents itself to view. "*Awake, awake, put on strength, O arm of the Lord ; awake, as in ancient days, in the generations of old. O Lord, revive thy work in the midst of the years ; in the midst of the years make known, in wrath, remember mercy.*"

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